

Time for God – Take 2

Purpose: To assist the congregation with further reflection on the theme of the Sunday service/passage.

Week beginning Sunday 15 September 2019 Lost and Found

Pray Thank God that goes out of his way to reach out to us, bending over backwards, going the second mile (and however many other phrases you wish!) to seek us out and restore us to fellowship with himself. Pray that we would be open to the overtures and learn to be as open in our seeking and welcome to others.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). Luke 15:1-10. We concentrated on the first parable, the sheep rather than the second one, the coin.

Background Jesus was being challenged and criticised for the time and attention that he gave to “undesirables” – to tax collectors and sinners to quote the older versions of the Bible. There was a religious and social convention that true believers must keep themselves ritually clean and not contaminate themselves by social interaction with those who were often considered beyond the pale. (There was probably a political element too as tax collectors were considered to be collaborators with the occupying Roman forces). Jesus tells these parables to emphasise God’s driving imperative to reach out and to save the lost. There is the not so hidden thought that perhaps many who think themselves to be within the fold are in need of being found too.

Possible questions/points to consider

1. What are the dangers of identifying those who are “outsiders”, “outcasts” even simply “those who don’t belong to the congregation”? Does it depend on WHY we identify them? Would it help if we went about things differently?
2. How ready are we to socialise, spend time with, share in joint ventures with those who don’t have anything to do with the Church? Are there any individuals or groups that we perhaps ought to be exploring?
3. As a congregation how should we balance our time and resources between people/events/needs WITHIN the Church sphere and people/events/needs OUTWITH the Church sphere? How might the parable help us to get a different outlook? How might that work out in practice?
4. The first parable is almost always called the Lost Sheep. Some have suggested that the emphasis is more on the shepherd – what evidence is there for a Seeking Shepherd? Traditionally, the Christian Church has talked about lost souls – and there is little doubt that there is a “lostness” whether recognised or not, in the sense of folk not experiencing forgiveness and fellowship with God. However, how might things been regarded differently were our emphasis to be put on the generosity and love of the searching shepherd than on the lostness of people? How might it affect our attitude to folks outwith the Church?
5. No matter how hard we might try to avoid it, there is a temptation to look down on those who have not come to faith. How does Jesus’ readiness to spend time with “outcasts” change that perspective? How might it cause us to take a different view of ourselves, seeing ourselves as wayward and lost, but for the searching shepherd?
6. Risk and asset managers might take issue with going after 1 lost asset, while risking 99 others! How does this illustrate God’s interest in people, indeed interest in individuals? How might it change our attitude to the way we treat others and give them our time and attention?
7. Feel free to explore any topics from the passage/theme even if they weren’t raised on Sunday.

Prayer: Lord, thank you that you aren’t grudging with your love or picky about who you seek out. You are intent on drawing us to yourself, whatever our background, regardless of what we have going for us (or not). Help us to be willing to embrace your grace and be as generous as we can be with our love and acceptance, remembering that we are your children only because of Jesus and not because of any perceived “goodness” in ourselves. Make us open to share your love with others. Amen.